Sermon: **“You have heard it was said… but I tell you”** (Matthew 5.21f, 27f, 31f, 33f)

Donald Trump and the judiciary. Mismatch between what he wants to do (the free movement of terrorists into USA - even if I think it is a bad implementation) and what the law allows. Frustrating for Trump, and disturbing for the innocent caught up.

There are three related tensions at the heart of our TEXT.

[1] The tension between what the law says and what is right.

Four times Jesus recognises the tension. It is *fairly* easy to keep the law, but this does not deal with the problem, which is what goes on in the heart.

This tension is also the gap between what goes on inside and outside – a recurring theme of Jesus.

Eg when a child is told to say sorry but does so in a not-sorry voice.

I can probably keep the laws OK, but Jesus’ interpretations are too hard. So if in TEXT Jesus makes me feel inadequate, is this all Jesus wants?

[2] Linked is the possible tension between religion and spirituality.

Religion easily makes us feel that we have done our bit and God should be grateful, spirituality helps us realise that life is not about ‘appeasing’ God (and thereby keeping God at arm’s length) but an openness to God, which welcomes God’s embrace.

[3] What makes for a thriving parish is not so much
the measurable (finances, state of the property, congregation size), but
the unmeasurable (atmosphere, relations between people, a passion for the community).

The unmeasurable relates to what is on the inside not on the outside.

In the end all this tension makes me realise my need of God. We like the law, religion and the measurable; my inadequacy when confronted with ‘the other’ leads to humility.

God comes to turn things upside-down, inside-out, for God deals with what goes on in the heart (which is untouched by law, mechanical religion and cannot be truly measured).